

Communications Studies (COMS) 371 - L01
Critical Media Studies
Winter 2012
Monday, 14:00 – 16:50

Instructor: Dr. Delia Dumitrica
Office
Location: SS344
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Office Hours: Tuesday 10:00 – 12:00, 14:00 – 16:00 or by appointment

Calendar Description

This course emphasizes major critical approaches in Communications Studies with the intent of introducing students to the theoretical foundations of media and mass communication related research. The course explores the contexts in which these theories arose, identifies their major strengths and weaknesses, and provides an appreciation of how critical theory engages the social world through research on communication and media. Areas to be covered include: the problem of communication, the culture industry (Adorno, the Frankfurt School), the Canadian school (McLuhan), structuralism and semiotics (Barthes), Cultural Studies (Hall), postmodernism (Lyotard).

Additional Information

- ⤴ This is a reading and writing intensive course.
- ⤴ The course assumes basic familiarity with communication theories (COMS 201).

Objectives of the Course

The goal of this course is to familiarize students with the major critical theories relevant to media studies. By the end of the course, you should:

- ⤴ Be able to recognize and contrast the major authors, concepts and ideas within the critical traditions;
- ⤴ Be able to apply them to analyze media content and practices;
- ⤴ Develop a critical awareness of media content and practices.

Internet and electronic communication device information

All cell phones should be silenced for the entire duration of the class. Laptops and iPads can only be used for taking notes. iPods, cell phones and gaming devices should be off during class.

Textbooks and Readings:

Meenakshi Gigi Durham, Douglas Kellner (Eds.) (2005). *Media and Cultural Studies: Keywords*. Revised Edition. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Assignments and Evaluation

You will be graded on six components:

- Participation (10%)
- Group presentation (10%) – *January 23 – April 9, 2012*
- 3 x Quizzes (30%) – *Monday, February 13, March 12, April 9, 2012*
- Short essay (10%) – *March 12, 2012*
- Media analysis journal (15%) – *March 26, 2012*
- Final project (25%)
 - Annotated bibliography (5%) – *February 27, 2012*
 - Discussion paper (20%) – *April 13, 2012*

It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment.

Note: Please hand in your essays directly to your tutor or instructor if possible. If it is not possible to do so, a daytime drop box is available in SS320; a date stamp is provided for your use. A night drop box is also available for after-hours submission. Assignments will be removed the following morning, stamped with the previous day's date, and placed in the instructor's mailbox.

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: NO

Policy for Late Assignments

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late. Note that I will not accept assignments overdue for more than a week.

Description of assignments

1. Participation (10%)

You are expected to be present for all classes, read assigned readings prior to class, take detailed notes and actively participate in class discussions. Opportunities to do small assignments and present them in class (such as summarizing the definition of certain concepts, reviewing the abstracts of a few academic articles, etc.), as well as small in-class and online activities will count towards your participation mark. The ability to contribute to the discussion of the assigned readings for each class is central to obtaining a high participation mark.

2. Group presentation (10%) – *January 23 – April 9, 2012*

You will work in small groups (2-3 people) to produce a 20 minutes presentation on a specific author and his theoretical contribution. Each member of the group is expected to read the primary author, to contribute to the research and to play a part in the oral presentation. The presentation will provide a biographical context for the author, an overview of her or his intellectual lineage, and an overview of her or his main theoretical contribution. Further details on this assignment will be provided in class.

3. Quizzes (30%) - *February 13, March 12 and April 9, 2012*

This assignment tests your understanding of the required readings and of the material covered in class. Each quiz takes 20-30 minutes and consists of multiple-choice questions. For each missed quiz, you will receive zero points.

4. Short essay (10%) – March 12, 2012

This short assignment gives you the opportunity to express and engage with your own opinions related to political communication. Details for this assignment will be provided in class.

Length: 4 - 5 pages, double-spaced, TNR 12.

5. Media Analysis Journal (15%) – March 26, 2012

This assignment gives you the opportunity to connect the arguments proposed in the readings to an analysis of media. The assignment should contain at least 4 entries discussing 4 different media products that you have recently encountered (e.g. TV series, commercial, newspaper article, etc.). You are expected to make use of one of the required readings and to discuss the respective media product from the perspective of the reading. In conclusion, you will reflect on how your own engagement with the readings and topics covered in this course has affected your relation to media in your own life.

Length: 5 – 7 pages, double-spaced, TNR 12.

6. Final project (25%) – February 27 and April 13, 2012

This assignment gives you the opportunity to engage more in-depth with a particular theoretical model. You will choose from a list of questions and you will produce a discussion paper and an annotated bibliography.

- The annotated bibliography will present 2 recent academic articles (2005 – 2010) in the field of media studies that make use of the theoretical model introduced by the chosen question. Provide the full reference, the abstract of the paper, and then explain in your words how the author makes use of the theoretical model. Length: 2-4 pages (excluding the original abstracts), double-spaced, TNR 12. Due: *February 27, 2012*.
- The paper will directly engage with the question, identifying the theoretical model that it introduces. It will provide a brief presentation of this theory, then it will explain how it may help us answer the question or not. Length: 7 - 10 pages, double-spaced, TNR 12. Due: *April 13, 2012*.

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

This course is conducted in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP). As one consequence, **students should identify themselves on all written work by placing their name on the front page and their ID number. Also you will be required to provide a piece of picture identification in order to pick up an assignment or look at a final exam from SS320 after classes have ended.**

For more information see also <http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy>.

Writing Skills Statement

Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, although to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. For details see <http://www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/needtoknow>. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc) but also general clarity and

organization. Research papers must be properly documented.

If you need help with your writing, you may use the Writing Centre. Visit the website for more details: www.efwr.ucalgary.ca

Grading System

The following grading system is used in the Department of Communication and Culture: (Revised, effective September 2008)

	Grading Scale
A+	96-100
A	90-95.99
A -	85-89.99
B+	80-84.99
B	75-79.99
B-	70-74.99
C+	65-69.99
C	60-64.99
C-	55-59.99
D+	53-54.99
D	50-52.99
F	0-49

Where a grade on a particular assignment is expressed as a letter grade, it will normally be converted to a number using the midpoint of the scale. That is, A- would be converted to 87.5 for calculation purposes. F will be converted to zero.

Plagiarism

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university.

You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. Readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin. This includes assignments submitted in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media, and material taken from such sources.

Please consult your instructor or the Writing Centre (MacEwan Student Centre 4th floor, efwr.ucalgary.ca) if you have any questions regarding how to document sources.

Academic Misconduct

For information on academic misconduct and the consequences thereof please see the current University of Calgary Calendar at the following link;

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability who may require academic accommodation, it is your responsibility to register with the Disability Resource Centre (220-8237) and discuss your needs with your instructor no later than fourteen (14) days after the start of the course.

Students' Union

For details about the current Students' Union contacts for the Faculty of Arts see <http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/governance/elections/home.html>

Student Ombudsman

For details on the Student Ombudsman's Office see <http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/services/student-services/student-rights.html>

Emergency Evacuation and Assembly points

For information on the emergency evacuation procedures and the assembly points see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>

"SAFEWALK" Program -- 220-5333

Campus Security will escort individuals day or night -- call 220-5333 for assistance. Use any campus phone, emergency phone or the yellow phone located at most parking lot booths.

Ethics

Whenever you perform research with human participants (i.e. surveys, interviews, observation) as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve of your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, see

The Department of Communication and Culture Research Ethics site:

<http://www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/ethics>

or the University of Calgary Research Ethics site:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/research/cfreb>

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

A detailed schedule of lectures and readings will be provided in the first day of class and posted on Blackboard.